

The University of Chicago

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EXPANSION TOWARD JAPAN
1791-1860

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE
SOCIAL SCIENCES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

JUNE, 1940

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ALLAN BURNETT COLE

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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SUMMARY

The reopening of Japan to intercourse with the West in the mid-nineteenth century is one of those episodes which though famous are often not completely understood. Considerable research and exposition have been done on the diplomatic aspects of American and European relations with Japan prior to the Imperial Restoration, and attention has also been paid to the quickening of the Japanese renaissance by occidental influences. More recent studies by such scholars as Takekoshi, Kuiper, and, more notably, Griffin have emphasized the economic, commercial, and consular phases of this meeting of cultures. Several historians explain the reopening of Japan by Americans as the result of expansion and even describe many of its processes, but in large measure they are wanting in adequate portrayal of the background of expansionism in America and the ideological forces which have furnished dynamics

¹James Murdoch, A History of Japan (revised by J. H. Longford; New York: Greenberg, 1926), Vol. III; J. H. Gubbins, The Progress of Japan, 1853-1871 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911); H. Satoh, Agitated Japan. The Life of Baron Ii Kamon-no-Kami Naosuke. Based on the Kaikoku Shimatsu of Shimada Saburō (revised by William E. Griffiths; Tokyo: Dai Nippon Tosho Kobushiki Kaisha, 1896); P. J. Treat, Diplomatic Relations between the United States and Japan, 1853-1875 (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1932), Vol. I; Tyler Dennett, Americans in Eastern Asia (New York: Macmillan Co., 1922); Frank Brinkley, A Short History of the Japanese People (New York and London: Encyclopaedia Britannica Co., 1915); E. M. Satow, Kinsē Shiriaku, a History of Japan, from . . . 1853. . . . to 1869 (revised ed.; Tokyo, 1906).

²Y. Takekoshi, The Economic Aspects of the History of the Civilization of Japan (London: G. Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1930), Vol. III; J. F. Kuiper, "Some Notes on the Foreign Relations of Japan in the Early Napoleonic Period, 1798-1805," Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan, 2d Ser., I (December, 1924), 55-82; Eldon Griffin, Clippers and Consuls, American Consular and Commercial Relations with Eastern Asia, 1845-1860 (Ann Arbor: Edwards Bros., Inc., 1938).

for continental and oceanic expansion. Another fraternity of American historians has analyzed American expansionism prior to the Civil War in its principal phases without applying them to the Pacific area; these historians stop with manifest destiny which at first involved essentially continental implications.

The present study might be called "A Sequel to Manifest Destiny." It seeks to determine the background and predisposition for the aggressiveness of American business men in the Far East and for the diplomacy of such men as Perry and Harris. One writer among many in 1845 noted the great movement westward in these words, "The ball is in rapid motion; and its momentum is hourly increasing. The popular impulse of a large and overwhelming majority of the American people is moving westward."³ That great momentum was not checked by California and the Pacific Ocean. The discovery of gold only offered further stimulation and encouraged still more daring projects. Filibusters were launched into Lower California, northern Mexico, Nicaragua, and even the Sandwich Islands were threatened.

American expansion in the Pacific during the eighteenthies and -fifties, thus fathered by the era of manifest destiny, imitated most of its parent's rationalizations and shibboleths. Little remodelling was necessary, and such doctrines as natural right and growth, political gravitation, beneficent utilization, and geographical predestination in one form or another became common in referring to commerce, diplomacy, and even to territory in the Pacific. Population pressure in America was predicted decades in advance, and indeed the predictions exceeded

³Quoted from the St. Louis American, November 24, 1845, by M. C. Jacobs, Winning Oregon, a Study of an Expansionist Movement (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1938), p. 137.

anything which has yet been experienced. Americans had developed a sense of national mission which was the more potent because it was religious, political-cultural in origin. This feeling was often expressed extravagantly. The voluminous literature of the period gives one the impression that few escaped in some measure the enthusiasms of the age. These assume significance for relations in the Far East because of their interrelation with actual American enterprises in that quarter and because they operated as powerful motivations. How these forces played upon individuals and by them were translated into policy and action are especially pertinent to this study. The performances of Samuel Wells Williams, the missionary, Matthew C. Perry, the naval diplomat, and Townsend Harris, the merchant-diplomat, are treated in this light. How did such men reflect their milieux and how, if at all, did they evince independence? One discovery which the answering of this question has involved is that all of these leaders in American relations with Japan shared certain expansive attitudes and that the interests which they promoted were by no means confined by what one would suppose to be their professional spheres. Even as ideologies permeated horizontally through all classes and occupations, so each American in the Far East represented his entire culture, except the small part against which he might react, and in the field of action he was in many cases called upon to fill more than one role.

What might be called the new manifest destiny was more commercial, naval, diplomatic, cultural, and less territorial in character than its immediate predecessor. In this connection the test is to be found in the attitude of the Department of State towards annexation. In the Pacific, official policy was much retarded as compared with the views of entrepreneurs in Hawaii, of Charles W.

King in 1839, and of such agents as Commander Thomas Ap Catesby Jones and Dr. Peter Parker. Yet in spite of assertions, such as that by President Fillmore in 1852, that annexations by conquest were precluded by our Constitution, it was probably less for this reason than because of domestic preoccupation that Pacific annexationists were voices crying in a wilderness.

If it is true that American expansion in the Pacific was the offspring of forces unleashed on the continent, it is equally demonstrable that the movement had as a grandsire the great age of discovery which stemmed from the European renaissance. Not only does the historian of today discern this relationship, but merchants, pioneers, navigators, railroad builders, journalists, promoters, and politicians of nineteenth-century America frequently recognized theirs as part of the long development of discovery, communication, and exploitation. Columbus and especially his English contemporaries and successors (for the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century was actually and consciously more Anglo-Saxon in composition than today) were acknowledged as their prototypes. "This, sir," cried William Mosely Hall of New York, speaking of the Pacific railroad before the Chicago River and Harbor Convention in 1847,

is the road to India! This is the great 'western passage' for which contending nations have struggled for centuries Thus, then, do we settle the great problem which has so long puzzled the subtlest genius and most daring energies of man.⁴

The tide westward can be seen in true perspective only when the age-long quest for more intimate relations with the Orient is accorded an important place in the historical mosaic.

⁴W. M. Hall, "'A Railroad from the States to the Pacific,' Chicago River and Harbor Convention Proceedings," Fergus Historical Series, No. 18 (Chicago: Fergus Printing Co., 1882), p. 94.

The term "Far East" became a misnomer from the American point of view when the preferred route to China and the East Indies came to be by Cape Horn rather than the Cape of Good Hope. Had the long-sought northwest passage existed as a practicable artery and had it been discovered, the Far East might have been otherwise denominated by maritime nations of both hemispheres. However, in the period of this study, it remained for a man-made steel passage to link Atlantic and Pacific waters. Within a decade after the completion of the first railroad in the United States prophets foresaw a transcontinental span, and in ten more years it was accepted as a foregone conclusion. Proponents of the Pacific railroad looked across the western ocean to China and Japan as commercial prospects and as immediate reasons for communications. "He must indeed be blind to the order of nature and Providence, and the general course of events," wrote a Missourian in 1848, "who perceives not that every step in human progress opens up a clearer view of the increase, the permanency and the benefits of this [oriental] commerce."⁵ No nation had controlled the largest portion of this traffic that had not dominated as a commercial power. America was on the threshold of its opportunity.

There came to be felt by Americans a new sense of destiny which was strengthened by a God-given geographical position. This young New World giant was to complete the cycle of civilization by establishing close cultural relations with the East--the cradle of civilizations which now were slumbering or were in early stages of returning consciousness. The United States seemed potentially the richest of nations, capable of supporting the largest of populations made happier than any other by "true," that is, Protestant,

⁵John Loughborough, "Commerce of the East," The Western Journal and Civilian, I, No. 12 (December, 1848), 644.

religion and free institutions. It was natural in the nineteenth-century heyday of humanitarianism that human beings with such advantages should wish to share and sometimes even to propagate them. Frequent reiteration indicates that not a few enthusiasts actually believed that America held the secret--which was no secret at all--of the millennium. Now that civilization was about to complete its circumfusion of the globe, the ultimate in progress was a matter of time only.

It is difficult for us today to understand fully the power of these attitudes, inasmuch as, particularly since the first World War, serious doubts have been cast upon the uninterrupted course of Western civilization and progress. Only after immersing one's mind in contemporary nineteenth-century literature does the significance of the fact appear that no such questions had then been so widely posed. For anyone to postulate that the leaders of Japan, given the choice between democracy and bureaucratic despotism, would cleave to the traditional form of government, would have been ridiculed by Americans who discerned in human struggles the rapid march of democracy.

At a time when the pioneer on land or sea was considered the typical American, it was but natural that individual initiative and resourcefulness should be applauded. Pacific enterprises--the development of the Northwest, China, and whaling trades--had usually promised good profits and always risks. Attractions for mercantile ventures continued throughout this period, and the reduction of nautical hazards was a contributing factor in the re-establishment of relations with the Japanese archipelago. This was an era of academic and applied science. Human curiosity was boundless: one is frequently impressed with the irritation which Japanese exclusion provoked merely because the outer world was compelled to remain

in partial ignorance.

The general employment of scientific methods in America and Europe was producing results which stimulated production, communication, and transportation. Furthermore, these technical advances bred an attitude of expectancy whereby inventions of the day were regarded as mere harbingers of instruments soon to be available. In such times the cultural gulf between West and East widened, and it was inevitable that Americans, like other Westerners, should have fortified a confidence in all phases of their civilization. In this connection it is important to notice that in certain respects Americans felt independent of Europe. Political and social events in the Old World were often painted in sordid panoramas, and it was commonly believed that the American Constitution had instituted a new dispensation.

The greatest achievements of science in ante-bellum America were performed by the harnessing of steam to engines in factories, on rails, and in ships. This development of power not only affected industry and commerce, but endowed with strategic value such positions as that of Japan, access to which had long been considered desirable and now became well-nigh indispensable.

The industrial revolution in America and the quantitative diminution of such natural resources as whales, fur-bearing animals, and sandalwood also altered the composition of the cargoes which Yankee merchants sold in Pacific ports. Manufactures, especially cotton textiles, became more important, although imports from the Far East continued, as a rule, to be of greater value than exports to those countries. These changes in American commodities of trade meant that close communication between Atlantic and all important Pacific ports would assume greater significance than ever. Markets were no longer to be considered adequate be-

cause they absorbed a stationary or gradually decreasing quantity of extracted resources, for example, furs and ginseng. The desideratum was henceforth to locate markets which might be expanded indefinitely with production and to gain equal access to, if not control of, inexhaustible sources of raw materials. Asia offered impressive opportunities, and an unexploited field such as Japan was particularly alluring.

The special attention paid to Japan in this study is not intended to ignore the fact that China and India were regarded by Americans, as by Europeans, as the great reservoirs of supply and demand. At least until 1830, Americans commonly thought of Asia as a whole and usually called it the East Indies. References to China often included its neighbor by implication, or mentioned Japan in the same breath. These empires, continental and insular, were part of the same problem of expanding intercourse. Any regular communication established between the Pacific Coast of the United States and China would sooner or later include the Japanese archipelago in its course. For the decade between the territorial consummation of the Union and its threatened disruption, relations with Nippon furnished unprecedented and sharply defined illustrations of American expansionism. As Occidentals became better acquainted with Japanese characteristics of energy, curiosity, and ability to assimilate, it was hoped that they might prove less recalcitrant than their continental neighbors in the face of Western impingement.

In 1853 and 1854, the United States despatched a naval expedition to Japan on a diplomatic errand. A primary aim of this study has been to explain how this came about at the time that it occurred. It has been shown in addition that the so-called Perry expedition was undertaken, not only in the greatest decade-and-a-half (1845 to 1860) of American economic history prior to the Civil

War, but that the material advance in phases which concerned Pacific commerce and communications was especially marked in precisely the five years (1849-1854) during which the expedition to Japan was undertaken. There was undoubtedly a correlation, but it can be only suggested by placing the two factual sequences in juxtaposition.

This is a significant period to investigate and to attempt to portray. America had just attained her continental destiny. A new commercial era in the Far East had commenced with the treaties with China from 1842 to 1844. A period of comparative free trade in the spirit of classical economists had begun in 1846, and its effects on Pacific commerce were apparent. Well might these decades be regarded with nostalgia by a tariff-ridden world.

The change, as far as the United States was concerned, came with the outbreak of war between the states. Protective tariff was espoused by triumphant Republicans. American tonnage in the carrying trade dwindled from its peak in 1861 and was not again equalled until the World War. The bogging down of economic advance, in some respects only temporary, set in before the war, having begun as early as 1854 and becoming more marked with the onset of financial depression in 1857. The aggressive idealism of the fabulous forties and fervid fifties had never burned higher in America; it resulted in conflagration and a crusade for human freedom.

Confusion in China was coincident with strife in the United States. From 1858 to 1860, revision of treaties with China and Japan ushered in a new period of relations. All these factors combine to validate the selection of 1860 as the date of termination for this study of American expansion toward Japan. In that year the Japanese government reciprocated diplomatically by sending to the United States Nippon's first foreign embassy in modern times.

The next few years saw the decline of American aggressiveness in the Far East, one phase of which was the loss of the diplomatic ascendancy in Japan which Commodore Perry and Townsend Harris had helped to secure.

This introduction will have indicated that the present study concerns itself primarily with American developments as conditioning factors in relations with the Empire of Nippon; in other words, it is essentially a study in American history. The organization of the narrative has presented problems which have been solved by division into parts and subordinate chapters. The first part describes interests and activities of Americans in the Pacific, with special reference to Japan, and the ways in which these were extended.

Part II discusses topically the ideologies particularly of the eighteen-forties and -fifties as they furnished motivations for, and rationalizations of, expansion. Quotations are copious in these chapters; true perception of the spirit and tempo of the times would otherwise be dulled. Next comes the great expansion of commerce and communication toward the Far East. The Perry expedition is described as a culmination of these various interests converging on the Japanese archipelago.

The final section is devoted to the initial establishment of an embassy and consulates, of American Protestant missions, and of residence and business relations in Japan. Previously mentioned modes of expansion were continually illustrated in these earliest years of legitimate intercourse with the Japanese. To say more here would be to place the pièce de résistance before the entrée--and, so, for the rest let the narrative speak for itself.

A DISCUSSION OF PRIMARY SOURCES

The bibliography on which this thesis rests is composed of some 1,400 entries, but only the primary sources will here be discussed. First might be mentioned published legislative documents: the Annals of Congress, Register of Debates in Congress, and The Congressional Globe, together with American State Papers, and House and Senate Reports and Documents. Legislative proceedings of California, Ohio, and Pennsylvania were used for specific references. Statistical publications of the Bureau of Statistics, Treasury Department, yielded data on industrial and commercial expansion.

Other documentary compilations which proved useful were Richardson's Messages and Papers of the Presidents and the series entitled either Diplomatic Correspondence or Foreign Relations of the United States. Narratives of the Wilkes and Perry expeditions have been published by order of Congress in a number of volumes each. Besides these, information was drawn from the writings of such travellers as Cook, Vancouver, Hennepin, Ledyard, Lewis and Clark, David Porter, and of such statesmen as Jefferson, John Quincy Adams, Benton, Seward, and Hamlin. In the University of Chicago, Newberry, and John Crerar libraries and in the Library of Congress there are miscellaneous proceedings of Pacific railroad and telegraph, as well as general commercial, conventions.

Contemporary periodicals, especially for the period 1840-1860, have been combed for material pertaining to expansionism and the Far East. These might be classified as political, commercial, literary, and religious, including missionary journals. Some British magazines and English and American journals in the Far East have proved useful. As examples of the latter, one might mention the Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan and the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, North China Branch, as well as The

Chinese Repository. In addition, helpful treatments of American continental and Pacific expansion are available in recent and current academic journals.

More than a score of newspapers were searched, especially those published in the eighteen fifties. Geographically these might be divided into four regions: the principal seaboard cities between Washington and Boston; the Middle West, especially Chicago; California (and here I regret that direct access was had only to the Daily Alta California, though that is an important source); and the Pacific, which included Western language journals at Honolulu, Hongkong, and Shanghai. I should not omit to mention religious newspapers in the United States and a few references to English press comment on the Perry expedition.

Almost all the manuscript material which I studied was well preserved, but twenty or fifty years hence, some of the missionary records may be in poor condition. Consular Instructions and Letters to and from California, Chinese treaty ports, Japan, Hongkong, and Batavia are filed in The National Archives as are Diplomatic Instructions and Despatches to and from China and Japan. The first volume of Japan Notes is also located there. Two other important collections in this repository are known as Instructions, Special Missions; and Special Agents. More narrow in scope are the categories called Credences and the Records of the Bureau of Appointments.

At the Library of Congress I had occasion to read portions of the W. L. Marcy, John Tyler, James Madison, Caleb Cushing, and Edmund Roberts papers. The letters, papers, and memoranda of Townsend Harris are usually in the custody of the College of the City of New York, but when I went through them they were on loan to the Editor of Treaties, Department of State. The small Ford and Jan-

vier collections in the New York Public Library also furnish background material on Harris's activities. While working at the Department of State, I was privileged to read the galley proofs of translations of Harris's twelve conversations with bakufu commissioners in January and February, 1858. Eugene Dooman, the translator, has had access to Tokugawa documents which most Japanese historians have not succeeded in gaining.

In the Office of Naval Records and Library there are collections of Letters to Officers, Ships of War, and of Captains' Letters. I searched through nine volumes of East India Squadron Letters, some of which are entitled East India, China, and Japan Squadron Letters. For interdepartmental correspondence, the Executive Letters and Confidential Letters are important. Numerous logs of merchant and naval vessels are deposited in The National Archives, New York Public Library, and Essex Institute, Salem, Massachusetts. In these institutions and in the Peabody Museum of Salem, the New York Historical Society, and the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston there are naval and mercantile diaries which are important sources. Several individual documents in the Office of Naval Records and Library were interesting; for instance, there was a printed memorandum on the career of Commander James Glynn and a manuscript report by John N. Reynolds on preparations for the expedition to the South Pacific.

In the Sage Library, New Brunswick, New Jersey, I read published and manuscript missionary letters of the Dutch Reformed denomination. The latter are contained in Correspondence Files of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of North America, Letters to Missions 1857-1870, and in Correspondence Files. . . . Japan Mission. 1860-1898. At the Church Missions House of the Protestant Episcopal Church I read only published missionary letters.

The letters of Dr. J. C. Hepburn, the missionary-physician, were made accessible to me at the headquarters of the Presbyterian Board of Missions in New York City.

Lastly, and among the most important commercial sources which were investigated, were the correspondence, diaries, and other records of Augustine Heard and Company located in Baker Library, Harvard Business School. This material provides a vivid and detailed picture of the expansion of an American firm from China to Japan immediately after the first definitive treaties.

